

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Currently amended) A ~~[[load]]~~ conveyance device for conveying a load, comprising:

a load supporting device having a through hole with a top opening, bottom opening, and an inner circumferential plane, the through hole passing in a gravity direction and being for allowing a load to move through the top opening of the through hole and through the bottom opening of the through hole without changing the size of the through hole; and

a fluid supplying device to supply a fluid into the through hole through the inner circumferential plane of the through hole to float a load in a first position within the through hole and to vary the net force in the gravity direction to move the load from the first position through the bottom opening of the through hole.[:]]

~~wherein when a load is dropped into the through hole from a top of the through hole, the load is supported under a floating condition by a force of the fluid in the through hole, and when the load is not supported by change of the force of the fluid without changing size of the through hole, the load drops from a lower end of the through hole to an outside.~~

2. (Original) The conveyance device of claim 1, wherein a top section of the through hole has a tapered wall section whose inside diameter increases toward a top open end.

3. (Original) The conveyance device of claim 2, wherein a taper angle of the tapered wall section is greater than 0 degree and less than 90 degrees.

4. (Original) The conveyance device of claim 2, wherein a height of the tapered wall section is greater than 0.2 times and less than 2.0 times the height of the load.

5. (Original) The conveyance device of claim 2, wherein a tapered end section having the taper angle greater than that of the tapered wall section, is formed on a top open end of the tapered wall section.

6. (Canceled)

7. (Currently amended) The conveyance device of claim ~~[[6]]~~1, wherein a porous material is provided at least at a part of the inner circumferential plane of the through hole.

8. (Original) The conveyance device of claim 7, wherein a porosity ratio of the porous material is 1% or more and 30% or less.

9. (Original) The conveyance device of claim 7, wherein the porous material is graphite.

10. (Original) The conveyance device of claim 1, further comprising:
a shutter member which is positioned lower than the fluid supplying device
and movable between a position for closing at least a part of the through hole and a
position for opening the through hole.
11. (Original) The conveyance device of claim 1, wherein pressure and/or
amount of the fluid to be supplied are changeable.
12. (Original) The conveyance device of claim 1, further comprising: a heating
device for raising a temperature of the fluid to be higher than a room temperature.
13. (Original) The conveyance device of claim 1, wherein the load is
conveyed in a heated and fused condition.
14. (Original) The conveyance device of claim 1, wherein a deviation from
spherical form of the load is half or less than average radius R of the load.
- 15.-16. (Canceled)
17. (Original) The conveyance device of claim 1, wherein the fluid is a gas of
a nitrogen concentration at 60 mol % or more.
- 18 - 22. (Canceled)

23. (Previously presented) A conveyance method comprising:
a step of dropping a load from a top end of a through hole which is passing through a load supporting device in a gravity direction,
a step of supporting the load denying gravity, by supplying a fluid into the through hole, and a step of stopping a support of the load by changing a flowing condition of the fluid without changing size of the through hole, and
allowing the load to break away from a bottom end of the through hole.
24. (Original) The conveyance method of claim 23, wherein the flowing condition of the fluid is varied by changing pressure and/or amount of the fluid.
25. (Original) The conveyance method of claim 23, wherein the flowing condition of the fluid is varied by closing at least a part of the through hole.
26. (Original) The conveyance method of claim 23, further comprising:
a step of heating the fluid.
27. (Original) The conveyance method of claim 23, wherein the load is conveyed while the load is heated and fused.
28. (Original) The conveyance method of claim 23, wherein a deviation from spherical form of the load is half or less than average radius R of the load.

29. (Original) The conveyance method of claim 23, wherein the load is glass.
30. (Withdrawn) The conveyance method of claim 23, wherein the load is plastic.
31. (Original) The conveyance method of claim 23, wherein the fluid is a gas of a nitrogen concentration at 60 mol % or more.
32. (Currently amended) A ~~[[load]]~~ conveyance device for conveying a load, comprising:
- a load supporting device having a through hole with a top opening and a bottom opening, the through hole passing in a gravity direction and being for allowing a load to move through the top opening of the through hole and through the bottom opening of the through hole;
 - a fluid supplying device to supply a fluid into the through hole to float a load in a first position within the through hole and to move the load from the first position through the bottom opening of the through hole; and
 - a shutter member positioned lower than the fluid supplying device and being movable between a first position for closing at least a part of the through hole and a second position for opening the through hole; and
- wherein when the shutter member is in the first position and fluid is being supplied to the through hole, the ~~[[a]]~~ load is dropped into the through from a top of the

~~through hole, the load is supported under a floating condition by a force of the fluid in~~
~~the through hole~~ conveying device can float a load within the through hole, and when
the shutter member is ~~moved from the first position to~~ in the second position, the load
conveying device can move a load through the bottom opening to an outside without
moving the through hole, ~~the load drops from a lower end of the through hole to an~~
~~outside.~~

33. (Previously Presented) The load conveyance device of claim 32, wherein
a top section of the through hole has a tapered wall section whose inside diameter
increases toward a top open end.

34. (Previously Presented) The load conveyance device of claim 33, wherein
a taper angle of the tapered wall section is greater than 0 degree and less than 90
degrees.

35. (Previously Presented) The load conveyance device of claim 33, wherein
a height of the tapered wall section is greater than 0.2 times and less than 2.0 times the
height of the load.

36. (Previously Presented) The load conveyance device of claim 33, wherein
a tapered end section having the taper angle greater than that of the tapered wall
section, is formed on a top open end of the tapered wall section.

37. (Previously Presented) The load conveyance device of claim 32, wherein the fluid supplying device supplies the fluid through an inner circumferential plane of the through hole.

38. (Previously Presented) The load conveyance device of claim 32, wherein pressure and/or amount of fluid to be supplied are changeable.

39. (Previously Presented) The load conveyance device of claim 32, further comprising:

a heating device for raising a temperature of the fluid to be higher than a room temperature.

40. (Previously Presented) The load conveyance device of claim 32, wherein the load is conveyed in a heated and fused condition.

41. (Previously Presented) The load conveyance device of claim 32, wherein a deviation from spherical form of the load is half or less than average radius R of the load.

42. (Previously Presented) The load conveyance device of claim 32, wherein the fluid is a gas of a nitrogen concentration at 60 mol % or more.

43. (Previously Presented) A conveyance method comprising:

a step of dropping a load from a top end of a through hole which is passing through a load supporting device in a gravity direction,

a step of supporting the load denying gravity, by supplying a fluid into the through hole which is closing at least a part of bottom portion of the through hole by a shutter member, and

a step of stopping a support of the load by opening the shutter member without moving the through hole, and allowing the load to break away from a bottom end of the through hole.

44. (Previously Presented) The conveyance method of claim 43, further comprising:

a step of heating the fluid.

45. (Previously Presented) The conveyance method of claim 43, wherein the load is conveyed while the load is heated and fused.

46. (Previously Presented) The conveyance method of claim 43, wherein a deviation from spherical form of the load is half of less than average radius R of the load.

47. (Previously Presented) The conveyance method of claim 43, wherein the load is glass.

48. (Previously Presented) The conveyance method of claim 43, wherein the fluid is a gas of a nitrogen concentration at 60 mol % or more.

49. (Previously Presented) The conveyance method of claim 23, wherein the flowing condition of fluid is varied by opening and closing a shutter member during supplying the fluid into the through hole.